



Is Telework for Me?

Telework may be for you if:

- ◆ You enjoy working independently,
- ◆ You are task-oriented,
- ◆ Your work tasks can be performed outside of the office,
- ◆ Your home offers a quiet, safe, distraction-free work environment.

However, telework is not for everyone. Telework may not be for you if:

- ◆ “You thrive in the social interaction of the workplace, as telework can create feelings of isolation” (West & Anderson, *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* 23.2, 2005);
- ◆ “You like the time-oriented nature of a traditional work environment, because some teleworkers report that the transition from working in the office to telework was difficult.”

(Rehabilitation and Assistive Technology Society of North America focus group report, 2006; courtesy of World Institute on Disability)

This fact sheet and others can be found at www.mdod.maryland.gov and www.mdworkforcepromise.org.

Questions?

Contact the Maryland Department of Disabilities

Telework for Employees and Job Seekers with Disabilities

What is Telework?

Telework, working away from the official job site, at home or at an off-site telework center, can be done on a full-time or part-time basis and is considered paid employment. Telework may be an option that will bring ease to your life and accommodate your disability. Through telework, current barriers to employment such as inadequate transportation, fatigue, inaccessible work environments, and the need for personal assistance, can be reduced and eliminated.

“ Sometimes referred to as telecommuting, telework is more than working from home; it is the practice of working remotely and securely from any place, at any time.” (Telework Consortium)

Telework is *not* telemarketing. Though a telemarketing job may be performed through working from home, so can other jobs that involve tasks which do not require your presence at the office or general worksite, such as emailing, teleconferencing, writing and researching.

Who Hires Teleworkers?

You may be hired as a teleworker by an employer who often hires people with disabilities. For example, the Maryland National Guard Human Resources Office Full-Support Telework Policy lists the enhancement “of efforts to accommodate people with disabilities” as a main goal (<https://www.md.ngb.army.mil>). You may telework for your employer under an existing general policy, or as a reasonable accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) if your employer does not have a teleworking policy.

“ [Telework] is a nice way to... help employees balance work-life issues.” (Wendy Mock, HR Manager, Macro International Inc. in Bethesda, Maryland)

How Do I Make a Request to Telework?

- ◆ Requesting to telework is a flexible, interactive process which begins with a request to your employer.
- ◆ You do not need to reference “Americans with Disabilities Act” or “reasonable accommodation” when you make this request, but should explain how your disability may interfere with your ability to do your job.
- ◆ Next, explain why you would like to telework. How will working from home remove limitations you may experience in the workplace?
- ◆ Your employer may request information about your disability, including reasonable documentation.
- ◆ Your employer may wish to discuss alternatives to full-time telework.
 - Can other accommodations be made so that you may work full-time at the workplace with-out barriers, or is teleworking the only effective option?
 - Based on the requirements of the job such as level of face-to-face interaction with coworkers or clients, or level of access needed to certain documents – you and your employer can determine if you will be able to work from home full-time or part-time.
- ◆ You and your employer will also need to discuss how you will be supervised at home, and what your schedule will look like.

Information based on “Work at Home/Telework as a Reasonable Accommodation” fact sheet published by the U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission, available online at: <http://www.eeoc.gov/facts/telework.html>.

What If I Need Technology In Order to Telework?

- ◆ **Employers** who have telework policies will sometimes provide the technology employees need to telework.
- ◆ The **Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)** provides the technology that Marylanders with disabilities need to telework in a specific job. To contact the DORS office nearest you, go to <http://www.dors.state.md.us/DORS/AboutDORS/DORSLocations/default> or call 1-888-554-0334. If you do not already have a case open with DORS, however, your services may be delayed because of existing waiting lists.
- ◆ You may apply for a loan from the **WorkABILITY Loan Program** (<http://www.mdtdap.org>) of the Maryland Technology Assistance Program / Maryland Department of Disabilities. The **WorkABILITY Loan Program** helps Maryland residents with disabilities qualify for low-interest loans to buy equipment to be able to telework or start small businesses. Though you are not guaranteed to get a loan, the program's criteria are much less stringent than banks' criteria, and will enable many more people to obtain loans. Loans may be used to purchase: Computers, printers, and related peripherals; Software; Office machines (such as fax machines, scanners, calculators); Telecommunications devices; Telecommunication system installation charges (such as DSL); Office furniture; Home and/or home office modifications for accessibility; and Assistive technology.

Know Your Rights: Telework and the Americans with Disabilities Act

- ◆ According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), employers are not required by the ADA to have a telework option for their employees. However, if an employer generally does offer telework to employees, this option must be extended to workers with disabilities.
- ◆ Employers who generally offer telework to all employees under certain conditions might be required under the ADA to waive this condition for workers with disabilities. For example, UMBC's telework policy requires that employees may only participate in telework after having "a performance rating of 'meets standards' in previous and current year." If a new employee with a disability makes a request to work at home, and can perform his or her job at home, the University may need to waive this condition to accommodate the new employee.
- ◆ If an employer allows a person with a disability to work from home, and does not have a telework policy, this is a **reasonable accommodation** under the ADA.
- ◆ An employer may, as a reasonable accommodation, allow an employee with a disability to telework only to the extent that the disability necessitates that he or she work from home. For example, the employer might allow the employee to telework only when his or her medical condition makes work in the office difficult or impossible, but may not allow the employee to telework at other times.
- ◆ Other reasonable accommodations may meet the needs of an employee with a disability and provide an alternative to telework. For example, if an employee preferred to work from home because of the paratransit schedule, the employer can adjust the employee's work hours to match the schedule so that the employee can work at the official job site.

Resources

Maryland Department of Disabilities

Voice / TTY: (410) 767-3660
Voice / TTY: (800) 637-4113
Email: mdod@mdod.state.md.us
Website: www.mdod.maryland.gov

Maryland Technology Assistance Program (MDTAP)

Voice: 1-800-832-4827
TY: 1-866-881-7488
Fax: 410-554-9237
Website: <http://www.mdtdap.org/>

Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)

Voice / TTY: 410-554-9442
Voice / TTY: 888-554-334
Website: <http://www.dors.state.md.us/dors>

Online Job Recruiting for Telework Seekers

Phone: 606-215-7242 or 800-541-0627
Website: www.teleworkrecruiting.com

Work from Home Jobs Recommended by the Wall Street Journal

Website: <http://www.myfoxny.com/myfox/pages/InsideFox/Detail?contentId=7092667&version=8&locale=EN-US&layoutCode=TSTY&pagel=5.7.1>

Commuter Connections: Locate Telework Centers in D.C., Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland

Website: www.mwcog.org/commuter/Bdy-telework-centers.html

Southern Maryland Telework Centers in Waldorf, Prince Frederick, and Laurel

Phone: 301-870-3008, EXT. 7628
Phone (Office): 301-934-7628
Fax: 301-934-7675
Email: JillW@csm.d.edu
Website: www.teleworkctr.org

Mid-Atlantic ADA Information Center: Disability and Technical Assistance Center

Voice / TTY: (800) 949-4232
Voice / TTY: (301) 217-0124
Website: <http://www.adainfo.org/>

Telework for a Federal Government Agency

Website: www.telework.gov
Email: teleworkquestion@opm.gov

Commuter Connections: Telework Employer Case Study, Macro International in Bethesda, Maryland

Website: http://www.mwcog.org/commuter/Telework%20Case%20Studies_072706%20MacroIntl.pdf

Telework Consortium (Works with agencies/businesses to develop telework programs)

Website: www.teleworkconsortium.org